

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 058

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEHRAN 08217

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY VANCE AND DR. BRZEZINSKI FROM SULLIVAN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, IR
SUBJ: RECOMMENDATION FOR PRESIDENT TO SHAH LETTER

REF: TEHRAN 8187

1. IN THE FEW DAYS THAT I HAVE BEEN BACK IN TEHRAN, IT HAS BECOME CLEAR TO ME THAT THE SHAH HAS MADE A FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL DECISION, AS ANNOUNCED IN HIS CONSTITUTION DAY SPEECH, TO TRANSFORM HIS AUTHORITARIAN REGIME INTO A GENUINE DEMOCRACY. HE HAS REACHED THIS DECISION AS A RESULT OF HIS OWN INTELLECTUAL CONVICTIONS, BECAUSE HE FEELS IRAN HAS BECOME TOO COMPLEX AND TOO VOLATILE TO GOVERN THROUGH THE CURRENT PROCESSES OF BENEVOLENT AUTHORITARIANISM. HE THEREFORE FEELS THAT THE ONLY WAY TO PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY OF THE COUNTRY IS TO CHANGE POLITICAL SYSTEM, EVEN IF THAT CHANGE PUTS THE MONARCHY AT RISK. INDEED, HE REALIZES THAT, UNLESS THE SYSTEM CHANGES, THE MONARCHY IS PREDICTABLY DOOMED.

2. UNITED STATES POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS HAS HAD ONLY A PERIPHERAL BEARING ON THIS DECISION, AND WE SHOULD THEREFORE REFRAIN FROM CLAIMING THIS A "VICTORY" FOR
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THAT POLICY. IT NEVERTHELESS REPRESENTS A DEVELOPMENT WHICH WE CAN ONLY WELCOME, BECAUSE OF OUR OWN INSTINCTIVE CONVICTIONS THAT THE PROCESSES OF DEMOCRACY, UNTIDY AS THEY MAY BE, ARE THE BEST GUARANTEES OF SURVIVAL AND PROGRESS FOR ANY NATION. I BELIEVE, THEREFORE, THAT WE SHOULD DEVELOP POLICIES AND TAKE ACTIONS DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE AND ENHANCE THIS NEW DEVELOPMENT IN IRAN.

3. THE IRANIAN PUBLIC HAS NOT YET FULLY ABSORBED THE IMPORT OF THE SHAH'S DECISION. INDEED, IN THEIR TRADITIONAL CYNICISM, MOST OF THEM DO NOT SEEM TO REGARD THE ANNOUNCED INTENTIONS AS BEING GENUINE. THE REACTION IN THE BAZAAR IS THAT THIS IS ALL "PLAY ACTING" FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE WEST, AND PARTICULARLY FOR THE UNITED STATES. NEVERTHELESS, TO AN OUTSIDE OBSERVER LIKE MYSELF, WHO HAS BEEN ABSENT FOR TWO MONTHS, THE CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL CLIMATE ARE STRIKING. THE PRESS, EVEN BEFORE THE NEW PRESS LAW HAS BEEN ENACTED, HAS COME TO RESEMBLE A WESTERN EUROPEAN PRESS. THE LIBERTY OF POLITICAL PERSONALITIES TO SPEAK OUT CRITICALLY IS UNPRECEDENTED.

4. THOSE IN POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY, ESPECIALLY THE MILITARY AND SECURITY OFFICIALS, ARE AWARE OF THE GENUINE NATURE OF THE SHAH'S DECISION BECAUSE THEY HAVE RECEIVED ORDERS FROM HIM TO IMPLEMENT THE CHANGES. MANY WHOM I HAVE SEEN HAVE GREAT DOUBTS ABOUT THE WISDOM OF THE SHAH'S COURSE, EVEN THOUGH THEY REMAIN LOYAL TO HIS ORDERS. THEY ARE NERVOUS AND AFRAID OF "THAT GREAT BEAST," THE PEOPLE OF IRAN. SOME OF THE MORE SOPHISTICATED OFFICIALS NOT ONLY AGREE WITH THE SHAH'S ACTIONS, BUT HAVE ENCOURAGED HIM IN THAT DIRECTION. EVEN THEY, HOWEVER, ARE NERVOUS, BECAUSE THEY HAVE NEVER
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PLAYED THE DEMOCRATIC GAME BEFORE AND THEY ARE NOT SURE HOW THINGS WILL TURN OUT.

5. AS FOR THE SHAH HIMSELF, YOU WILL HAVE READ IN MY 8187 THAT HE HAS NOT MADE HIS DRAMATIC DECISION IN A BURST OF EXHILARATION AND ZEAL. HE IS MOROSE, NERVOUS AND SUSPICIOUS. HIS GAME PLAN, WHICH HE NURTURED IN SUCH CONFIDENCE FOR TWO DECADES, HAS HAD TO BE SCRAPPED. HE HAS LITTLE CONFIDENCE IN THE WISDOM OR RESPONSIBILITY OF THE IRANIAN PEOPLE, EVEN THOUGH HE HAS DECIDED TO PUT HIS FATE AND THAT OF HIS COUNTRY IN THEIR HANDS. HE FEARS EVERYBODY WILL PERCEIVE HIM AS SLIPPING AND THEN, IN THE BEST MIDDLE EAST TRADITION, JOIN IN KICKING HIM AS HE GOES DOWN. HE ESPECIALLY FEARS THE UNITED STATES WILL DO THIS.

6. THE REACTION OF HIS REAL ENEMIES, FROM THE SOVIETS THROUGH THE RADICAL ARABS AND THE FUNDAMENTALIST MUSLIMS, IS FORESEEABLE. THEY WILL TRY TO CAUSE SUCH TROUBLES IN THE STREETS THAT THE SHAH WILL BE FORCED TO IMPOSE MARTIAL LAW COUNTRY-WIDE. ON THE OLD LENINIST PREMISE THAT "WORSE IS BETTER," THEY WILL SEEK TO FRUSTRATE

POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION AND INSTIGATE THE WORST SORT OF POLITICAL REPRESSION. IN THIS WAY, THEY WILL ATTEMPT TO PROVE TO THE WORLD THAT THE SHAH'S "DEMOCRACY" IS A FARCE AND THAT ANY ELECTIONS TO BE HELD ARE MOCKERY.

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7. IT IS FAR FROM CERTAIN HOW THE POLITICAL SCENE WILL DEVELOP HERE. IRANIANS ARE AN UNDISCIPLINED PEOPLE, WITH CLANNISH, QUERULOUS, INTERNECINE HABITS AND WITH NO REAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE PRACTICE OF DEMOCRACY. COOPERATIVE ACTION FOR THE GENERAL GOOD IS NOT AN IRANIAN CHARACTERISTIC. THE FABRIC OF THIS SOCIETY, UNDER THE STRESS OF A GENUINE DEMOCRATIC OPPORTUNITY, MAY DISINTEGRATE AND THE SHAH MAY FEEL HE HAS TO REIMPOSE STRICT POLITICAL CONTROLS. THAT SORT OF THING HAS HAPPENED BEFORE AND THE U.S. ASSISTED IN THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF "INTERNAL SECURITY." IF WE CONSIDER IT IN OUR INTERESTS TO SEE THE SHAH PERSEVERE IN HIS DEMOCRATIC DECISION THIS TIME, WE SHOULD CONSIDER WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP.

8. THE SHAH'S PARTISANS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN VYWFES Q (#) ME WITH SUGGESTIONS OF PUBLIC ACTIONS WE COULD TAKE TO SHOW OUR SUPPORT FOR HIS POLICY OF LIBERALIZATION AND TO SUSTAIN HIM IN HIS DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE. THEY ARE PARTICULARLY MINDFUL OF THE RUMORS PREVALENT HERE THAT THE U.S. WISHES TO "DUMP" THE SHAH OR DESTABILIZE THE COUNTRY. SINCE I FEEL WE WILL HAVE TO WEIGHT ANY CORRECTIVE ACTIONS VERY CAREFULLY, I AM NOT YET PREPARED TO PROPOSE ANY SUCH MEASURES UNTIL I CAN HAVE FAR WIDER CONSULTATIONS WITH ALL SECTORS OF THE IRANIAN BODY POLITIC. IN THE MEANTIME, HOWEVER, I
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BELIEVE A LITTLE PRIVATE ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE SHAH WOULD BE IN ORDER. ACCORDINGLY, I HAVE DRAFTED THE FOLLOWING PROPOSED LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE SHAH. I WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE AUTHORITY TO DELIVER IT, WITH WHATEVER MODIFICATIONS THE PRESIDENT MAY MAKE, AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY. I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH COURT MINISTER HOVEYDA AT 1100 THE MORNING OF THURSDAY, AUGUST 31. WHILE I REALIZE THIS IS VERY SHORT NOTICE, IT WOULD BE THE IDEAL TIME TO ACT.

9. DRAFT LETTER FOLLOWS:

"YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY,
I HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING RECENT EVENTS IN IRAN WITH CONCERN AND WITH GREAT SYMPATHY FOR THE PROBLEMS YOU HAVE ENCOUNTERED IN ATTEMPTING TO PURSUE A COURSE OF POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION IN THE FACE OF AGGRAVATED CIVIC DISORDER. ALL OF US WHO WISH IRAN WELL HAVE ADMIRERD THE COURAGE YOU DISPLAYED IN THE POLICY WHICH YOU ANNOUNCED IN YOUR CONSTITUTION DAY MESSAGE.

AS I HAVE TOLD YOU, THE UNITED STATES REGARDS THE INDEPENDENCE, THE STRENGTH, AND THE PROSPERITY OF IRAN AS CRITICAL TO OUR OWN SECURITY AND THAT OF OUR CLOSEST FRIENDS AND ALLIES. THEREFORE, EVENTS IN YOUR COUNTRY ARE OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE TO US. FROM WHAT I KNOW OF POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL DYNAMICS, I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE MADE THE RIGHT DECISION IN MOVING AT THIS STAGE TOWARDS A CHANGE IN IRAN'S POLITICAL SYSTEM, DESPITE THE RISKS INHERENT IN SUCH A DECISION. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT ANY OTHER COURSE WOULD ENTAIL EVEN GREATER FUTURE RISKS TO THE INTEGRITY OF YOUR COUNTRY AND ITS INSTITUTIONS.

AT THE SAME TIME, FROM WHAT I UNDERSTAND OF IRAN'S

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HISTORY AND IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS, I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT THE INSTITUTION OF THE MONARCHY AND YOU, PERSONNALLY, WITH YOUR VAST EXPERIENCE, ARE BEST EQUIPPED TO GUIDE IRAN THROUGH THESE DANGEROUS BUT EXCITING CHANGES.

AMBASSADOR SULLIVAN HAS REPORTED TO ME HIS RECENT CONVERSATION WITH YOU IN WHICH YOU INDICATED THAT THERE ARE THOSE IN IRAN WHO BELIEVE THAT MY GOVERNMENT HAS HAD A HAND IN RECENT EVENTS WHICH WOULD TEND TO

DESTABILIZE YOUR SOCIETY OR DIMINISH THE RESPECT IN WHICH WE CONTINUE TO HOLD YOU PERSONALLY. I AM DEEPLY TROUBLED BY THIS REPORT AND DISTURBED BY THE MOTIVATIONS OF THOSE WHO WOULD SPREAD SUCH FALSE ACCUSATIONS. I KNOW I DO NOT NEED TO REASSURE YOU PERSONALLY OF MY CONTINUING SUPPORT. HOWEVER, I SHALL ASK SECRETARY VANCE AND OTHERS TO STUDY WAYS IN WHICH WE CAN EFFECTIVELY CONVINCE EVERYONE OF ITS SINCERITY AND DURABILITY.

PLEASE ACCEPT ALL MY BEST WISHES AS YOU MOVE AHEAD IN YOUR EFFORTS TO FIND A POSITIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE, AND DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION TO YOUR COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS. IT IS MY CONVICTION THAT, DESPITE THE TRAUMA THAT MAY RESULT, IT IS MORE SATISFACTORY IN THE LONG RUN TO MEET DIFFICULT PROBLEMS SQUARELY AND DIRECTLY. I KNOW, FROM THE REMARKABLE HISTORY OF YOUR LONG REIGN AND FROM ALL THE ACHIEVEMENTS YOU HAVE BROUGHT YOUR NATION, THAT YOU SHARE THIS VIEW.

WITH WARMEST PERSONAL REGARDS TO YOU AND THE LOVELY SHAHBANU, IN WHICH ROSALYNN JOINS, I AM,
SINCERELY, JIMMY CARTER"

10. I BELIEVE THIS PROPOSED LETTER WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF STIFFENING THE SHAH IN HIS RESOLVE TO HOLD GENUINELY DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS AND THAT ITS EARLY
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DELIVERY IS A TIMELY NECESSITY.
SULLIVAN

NOTE BY OC/T: TEHRAN 8217 2/2 (#) AS RECEIVED. CORRECTION TO FOLLOW. (PARA. 8).

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